Cavalcanti, Alberto de Almeida (6 February 1897, Rio de Janeiro - 23 August 1982, Paris)

Alberto Cavalcanti was a Brazilian-born film director and producer who made significant contributions to documentary and post-war cinema. In 1926 he made his first film, [*Rien Que les Heures*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hjA4a44SGs) [*Nothing but Time*], in Paris, which was a predecessor of Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [*Berlin: Symphony of a Big City*, 1927] to which he also contributed. With *Rien…* he was creating the prototype of the modernist city symphony, with no narrative story but an internal structure, dramatizing the documentary form. He was close to the surrealist movement which helped him to delve into the dark sides of reality, as in *En rade* [*Sea Fever*, 1928]. In the 1930s he joined John Grierson’s GPO Film Unit (General Post Office) and became its most modernist director through his use of formalist editing techniques. Here, he directed experimental short documentaries such as *Coal Face* (1935), based on a poem by W. H. Auden. In the 1940s he joined Ealing Studios where he made many films and mentored other directors. Of note during this stage was a collective film, *Dead of Night* (1945), a classic of the fantasy genre. After leaving Ealing he filmed two film noirs with strong social connotations: *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947) and *For Them that Trespass* (1949). In Brazil, he was offered a position to teach cinema at the [Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo](http://mam.org.br/) and filmed one of his strongest movies, *O canto do mar* [*Song of the Sea,* 1952], which tells the story of a *sertão* family exodus, fleeing from drought and misery.

References and further reading:

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Hillier, J., Lovell, A., and Rohdie, S. (1972) “Interview with Alberto Cavalcanti”, in *Screen*, 13 (2): 36-53.

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Werth, M. (2013) “Heterogeneity, the City, and Cinema in Alberto Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures”,* in *Art History*, 36 (5): 1018-1041.

Filmography

[*Rien Que les Heures*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hjA4a44SGs) [*Nothing but Time*, 1926]

[*La p’tit Lili*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3B-0oqroHs)(1927)

*En rade* [*Sea Fever*, 1928]

*The Song of Ceylon* (1934)

*Coal Face* (1935)

*Night Mail* (1936)

*Spare Time* (1939)

*Film and Reality* (compilation) (1942)

*Champagne Charlie* (1944)

*Dead of Night* (1945)

*They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947)

*For Them that Trespass* (1949)

[*O canto do mar*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lAbZzCsXe4)[*Song of the Sea,* 1952]

Paratextual material

<http://explore.bfi.org.uk/4ce2ba1357f9d>

Information (videoconference, stills, filmography, etc.) at BFI Website.

<http://www.fandor.com/keyframe/fourteen-donts-by-alberto-cavalcanti>

Some advises by Cavalcanti to film documentaries.

<http://www.festival-cannes.fr/en/article/57959.html>

Brazilian Cinema and the Festival de Cannes (2011)

<http://www.moma.org/pdfs/docs/press_archives/4769/releases/MOMA_1971_0205_153.pdf?2010>

Exhibit program at MOMA, NY.

<http://www.moviemail.com/directors/1203/Alberto-Cavalcanti/>

Web to buy DVD’s.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDuHKJ_9fdk>

Full movie: *Simão, o Caolho*, 1952.

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